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THE JEW
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RADICAL, LIBERAL
AND
CONSERVATIVE

BY
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THE JEW AS RADICAL, LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE.

By LOUIS I. NEWMAN.

"All Jews are radicals; all radicals are Jews." This is the burden of the new anti-Semitism in the Western World. Upon these premises the enemies of Jewry have built several damaging syllogisms with scrupulous regard for logic when it serves their purpose, and an equally scrupulous disregard for truth. A corollary of the charge is that radicalism, the alleged weapon of the poor Jew, is an ally of conservatism, the weapon of the "capitalist" Jew, in their joint effort to establish Jewish hegemony over the Gentile nations.

It is easy to assert that these and similar accusations are a legacy of war hysteria; that the world is passing through a period of emotional instability wherein the vaporings of diseased minds, ignored in times of tranquillity, have become the textbook of racial prejudice. It is easy to assert that men have suffered themselves to surrender to the habit of hate, incurred as a measure of success in war, but now enthroned with increased potency in days of peace; with victory over former enemies a new object of vilification must be found; hence the Jew, as the

weakest national group, is selected as the target for mankind's passions and hostility. Yet neither analysis of the world's present neurosis serves to crush the accusations of Jewish radicalism. A statement of the true situation alone can suffice.

For it is palpably false to affirm even that most Jews are radicals and most radicals Jews. We are a many-sided people, complex, variegated, with a kaleidoscopic diversity of opinion; we are a group, not of one, but of many minds. It has been rightly said that where there are ten Jews there are at least eleven views. The anti-Semite errs fatally and completely if he generalizes from one or even fifty Jewish radicals to snap judgments concerning the entire Jewish people. Jews throughout history have allied themselves with world movements, each according to the dictates of his individual conscience; Jews have been Whig, Tory, progressive, moderate, independent, liberal, reactionary and Mugwump, each in line with the prompting of his social and intellectual environment and his own voluntary choice.

Thus it follows that in the United States and other lands Jews have been and are members of all political and economic groups. The Republican, Democratic, Prohibitionist, So-

cialist, Farmer-Labor, Socialist-Labor count among their supporters Jews of the most varied economic station and political philosophy; were other parties existent in this country Jews would be found among them. It is needless to cite names of prominent Jews in the major political units; not only Jewish "capitalists," but hosts of the Jewish middle classes and "proletariat" voted during the recent election in the ranks of Democrats or Republicans. As further illustration of the diversity of Jewish opinion, it is safe to say that many Jews "split their ballot" in accordance with their desire to place in office the best men, regardless of party and creed.

The belief that the bulk of Jews throughout America are members of the Socialist Party is mere Fordesque fantasy. It is important to observe that neither Eugene V. Debs, Presidential candidate, nor Seymour Stedman, Vice-Presidential candidate, on the Socialist ticket, have Jewish blood in their veins. Moreover, the extremist wing at the Socialist convention, was led by delegates from Chicago Stockyard districts; the New York delegates constituted the conservative wing. The radical Non-Partisan League in the Northwest was conceived and is led by typical

American farmers of long-established American lineage.

When some Jews vote the Socialist ticket it is for reasons not entirely reprehensible. A radical-proof New York periodical recently described the psychological impulses which determine the party affiliations of new voters of immigrant stock. These have come from Europe, hoping to find improved working conditions; they are forced into the grind of the sweat shop and contract labor; they have come to America, seeking blessed relief from Eastern European Ghettos; they are plunged into the unseemly tenement house life of our congested metropolitan centers. In bitter disappointment and with despair in their hearts they turn to those political parties which promise speedy release from their heavy economic burdens. It is because a large number of Jews are members of the working classes that they have proletarian sympathies. When their economic interests change, their political ties follow suit. It is axiomatic that each country has the Jews it deserves: Free America has loyal, contented Jewish citizens. It is only when American liberty for all her citizens is abridged, whether through the stress of war or the reign of reaction, that some Jews become con-

spicuous through their participation in heterodox movements.

Herein lies the key to reputed Jewish activities in the radical movements of European countries. Where tryanny is there we find the Jewish protestant; where czarism and kaiserism flourish there the Jew assumes his historic role as protagonist of the oppressed masses. Anti-Semites in America and abroad are seeking to prove that the downfall of Germany, Austria and Hungary must be laid at the door of Jewish agitators, upon whose Jewish kinsmen the militarists, it is said, are justified in wreaking thrice-fold vengeance. How much knavery and hypocrisy lie in this twisted attitude! It was but two years ago that the entire allied world congratulated the Jewish anti-kaiserites of Prussia for their daring stand against the military and autocratic caste. A Christian clergyman who has recently taken up the cudgels in support of the "Protocols" proclaimed far and wide that whatever was good in Germany arose through the cultural contributions of German Jews: Heine, the satirical foe of Prussianism, was quoted in magazine, newspaper and book for his witty expose of Teutonic stupidity; Maximilian Harden was dubbed by allied journalists "the only honest

man in Germany"; the Arbeiter Zeitung Ring and the Poalei Zion of Austria were hailed in the journals of Europe as the only courageous and outspoken liberals in the land of the Hapsburgs. Yet today, despite the fact that Jews assisted German freemen to overthrow the yoke of Ludendorf, Hindenburg and William, despite the fact that Jewish participation in Central European upheavals shortened the world war by months if not years, the anti-Semite labors to fasten the stigma of "radical" upon all Jews. It was a perilous task for the Jewish liberal to beard the Prussian lion in his very den, yet he risked life and property for the safety of democracy; today, when the world is freed from the Teutonic menace, it remembers not that the Jew was a martyr, but that he was a "radical." Posterity may vindicate German Jewish freemen as "foremost soldiers on the battlefields of human liberation," but mankind, rescued from enslavement, is today singularly ungrateful.

The same unhistorical method is applied to Jewish participation in Russian anti-Czarist movements. A short seven years ago the democratic peoples applauded the efforts of Russian intellectuals, assisted by many Russian Jews, to substitute repub-

lican government for an intolerably corrupt bureaucracy. Is it to be wondered that Russian Jews in great measure sympathized with the liberal elements in struggling Russia? Not only did the Jew feel the heavy hand of autocrats, who exacted from him and his suffering compatriots the last drop of blood in expiation for progressive thought, but the Jew saw as well millions of peasantry and proletariat deliberately kept in sodden ignorance and ground underfoot in economic servitude. It was not self-interest, but his hereditary sympathy for the "under dog" that prompted the Jew to galvanize by sheer intellectual energy the sluggish masses of Russia into republican activity. When the Russian revolution ceased to be a purely Jewish concern then was it crowned with success.

Can the Jew be blamed for his suspicion of those who would restore the "ancien regime" in any land? A spokesman of the ill-fated Kolchak, during the days his chief's fortunes were at high tide, issued this warning in New York: "Woe to the Jews if a stable government is ever established in Russia." Petlura, Judenich, Denikin, Gregorieff, Wrangel and now Balakovich—all leaders of dispossessed emigres and their armies of mercenaries—have been not only

monarchists, but pronounced anti-Semites; every anti-Soviet general has either encouraged or tolerated pogroms against innocent Jewish communities. Can the bleeding multitudes of war-harassed Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine be condemned if their anti-Soviet policy is not sufficiently firm to satisfy Western Europe? If the Jews of these lands cast in their lot with the Soviets they are punished by the latter's foes; if they are affiliated with the anti-Soviet parties the Bolshevists persecute them; if Jewish communities remain neutral they are assailed by the militarist elements of both camps. The arm-chair anti-Bolshevist can little appreciate the true status of the Jew in stricken Eastern Europe.

It is a grotesque invention to affirm that Jews alone have been the guilty leaders of Russian radicalism. The well-to-do Jews have been persecuted in the same fashion as other Russian bourgeoisie; the various editions of the "Protocols" are replete with badly concealed evidence to the effect that not Jews alone, but all racial groups, are represented in the Bolshevik administration. H. G. Wells, whose various references to Jews and Judaism throughout his novels and essays would scarcely win for him

the title of philo-Semite, remarks in a recent brochure:

"It is these young men who constitute the living force of Bolshevism. Many of them are Jews, because most of the Russian emigrants into America were Jews, but few of them have any strong racial Jewish feeling. They are not out for Jewry, but for a new world. So far from being in a continuation of Jewish tradition the Bolsheviki have put most of the Zionist leaders in Russia in prison and they have proscribed the teaching of Hebrew as a reactionary language. Several of the most interesting Bolsheviki I met were not Jews at all, but blond Nordic men. Lenin, beloved leader of all that is energetic in Russia today, has the Tartar type of face and is certainly no Jew."

If Jews have played an important role in the rise and the career of the Soviet Government—and what has the Jew to gain by a denial of this fact?—they have been prompted by motives, not on behalf of Jewish supremacy, but purely and entirely because of their self-styled "humanitarian" aims. We may disagree fundamentally with the tenets of Russian radicalism, yet we must dismiss as chimerical any assertion that "the Bolshevik-led strike is a Jewish

financial weapon to wreck Gentile business, in order that it may easily fall into Jewish hands." In our estimate of Jewish membership in Russian liberal ranks it is criminal to forget the background of Czarist suppression, which, among its other consequences, has brought contemporaneous Russia to economic debacle. Nor must we cease to remember that the restoration of old-time bureaucracy will mean the return of that hideous anti-Jewish "politik" which today has fastened upon disillusioned Hungary the "white terror." Jewry in Russia hopes for the rise of a truly democratic and liberal government which will preserve the fruits of the revolution of March, 1917, and enable resurgent Russia to live in unity with all sister nations.

We must have a genuine sense of historical perspective in our judgment of Jewish heterodoxy. Who knows but that within a few decades Jewish liberals who are today ruthlessly condemned and excommunicated may be approved in the same degree that the world praises the anti-Prussian achievements of Heine, Boerne, Hartmann, Saphir, Abraham Jacobi and other distinguished Jews who fought with pen and musket the battles of German constitutionalism? After all, it was a Jew—Johann Ja-

coby—who in 1848, as head of a popular delegation, retorted to stubborn Friedrich William IV: “It is the great misfortune of kings that they will not listen to the truth.” An intolerant public may do well to recall that in all movements of religious progress Jews and the Jewish Old Testament have played a significant role. The author of this paper has under preparation a dissertation on the theme, “Jewish Influence in Christian Reform Movements,” wherein it is demonstrated that the great heterodox parties—Waldensian-Albigensian, Hussite, Reformation, Zwinglian, Calvinist, Unitarian and Puritan—are profoundly indebted for their initial stimulus to the Jewish interpretation of the Bible and the direct participation in each movement of contemporary Jewish “radicals.” America has not been endangered by reason of the fact that early American Puritanism was built upon an Hebraic model, had pronounced Jewish aspects and adopted a “Body of Liberties” patterned after Rev. John Cotton’s Jewish constitution, entitled “Moses: His Judicials.”

It is a truism to say that the founder of the Christian religion was himself a Jewish “radical” and that the Apostles and early Christians were dubbed an “Internationale,” as

pernicious in the eyes of reactionary Greece and Rome as the world believes the radical movement of today to be.

Yet is it merely the Jewish "radical" to whom the anti-Semite takes exception? Is not the Jewish "conservative" equally obnoxious? The real grievance of the new anti-Semitism is that the Jew is adjusting himself more and more to the opportunities for normal life afforded him in the era of "emancipation." The Jew will continue to suffer bombardment because he is a leader born; he will never be wholly free from criticism because he stands conspicuously in the limelight by reason of his strong racial and individual personality. Whatever the Jew does he does with intensity; therefore he must be prepared to encounter intense opposition.

The world has nothing to fear from Jewish radicalism as such. Jewish activity in modern civilization neutralizes itself. Each Jewish extremist at odds with the present social order is balanced by a Jewish conservative who ardently champions it. The Jewish people in its entirety duplicates the conflicts and clashes of all non-Jewish peoples. No more deadly foe of the Jewish "capitalist" exists than the Jewish Socialist.

Thus, in so far as influence is exerted by Jews as Jews, the extremes, both of radicalism and reaction, nullify each other. Hence the world can safely banish from its fevered imagination the specter of Jewry moving forward to an assault upon modern life as one united phalanx. Jewry is a battleground within itself, the warriors in civil combat, slaying each his brother.

Anti-Semitism must abate in democratic Western lands, not so much for the sake of the Jew as for the sake of the countries wherein he is its victim. For anti-Semitism, militarism and reaction are an abiding and indivisible trinity. Liberalism and justice for the Jew are per contra indissolubly wedded. The people of the United States, home of the Puritans and Roger Williams, and the people of England, birthplace of Cromwell and Macaulay, must beware lest their republicanism become infected with the malignant virus of anti-Jewish hatred. No surer sign of disease in the body politic, of something "rotten in the state of Denmark" obtains than the appearance of propaganda against the Jew. If the American Jew is forced to the conclusion that it is not his radicalism, his liberalism or his conservatism at which the world takes um-

brage, but himself, his presence, his activity as a Jew, then no further proof is needed that America has descended into the valley of the shadow of reaction. If, on the other hand, the anti-Jewish fury vanishes we may rest content that American liberty has regained its pristine purity.

Hence the American Jew must fearlessly throw his influence into the balance on behalf of a resumption of our war-curtailed liberties. In the contest between safety and conscience he must boldly speak the truth, though martyrdom be his portion. We must be faithful to ourselves though the world strive to drown us in blood. Thus only can Jewry continue as a constructive and creative force in human progress. The world must trust the genius of Israel to function, not as a destroying agency, but affirmatively and positively. We offer anew our services to a troubled world that, together with all lovers of liberty, we may inscribe the spiritual charter of an improved human order. "See," says the Prophet, "I have this day sent thee among the nations and the kingdoms . . . to build and to plant."

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